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ABSTRACT

This second of three reports on a study of returning students attending Toronto Secondary Schools during the 1977-78 academic year describes the attitudes of principals, vice-principals, guidance counselors, teachers, and regular students toward returning students on the following issues: (1) the best educational setting for returnees; (2) the reasons students return to school; (3) the problems students have on returning to school; (4) the problems the schools create for returnees; (5) the problems returnees create for the schools; (6) the solutions to the problems which exist; and (7) characteristics of returning students. A sample of 229 students and 348 administrative and teaching staff from the Toronto Secondary Schools participated in this survey, which collected data through two sets of questionnaires, one for students and another for staff. The responses of the students are presented in the first half of the findings, while those of the school personnel are reported in the latter half. Highlights of these findings indicate that students and staff feel that the best form of education for returnees is dependent on the returnees' needs, and that, while students tend to feel it is not easy for dropouts to return, staff feels it is. (Author)

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STUDY OF RETURNING STUDENTS

PART II

The Attitudes of Principals, Guidance Counsellors, Teachers and Students to Returning Students

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#149

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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December, 1979

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INTRODUCTION

In June of 1977, the School Programs Committee of the Toronto Board of Education received and approved a recommendation from the Report of the Patterns of Dropping Out Committee --

> "that information for future decision-making be obtained about the following: the returning student; characteristics, work experience, and the attitude of the schools to their return."
>
> (page 10)

The recommendation was referred to the Director of Education for a feasibility report, and the recommendation was passed by the Board in October, 1977.

The data for this study were gathered by the Research Department in five phases:

- **Phase I:** Survey of all Toronto Secondary School students to identify returning students and some of their characteristics.
- **Phase II:** A questionnaire to a sample of Toronto Secondary School students who have never dropped out to determine their attitudes toward returning students.
- **Phase III:** A questionnaire to all Toronto Secondary School principals and vice-principals, all secondary school guidance counsellors, and a sample of secondary school teachers to determine their attitudes toward returning students.
- **Phase IV:** In-depth interviews of approximately 250 returning students.
- **Phase V:** Identification and in-depth interviews of a similar group of students who have dropped out of school and not returned.

This report is a description of the attitudes of principals, vice-principals, guidance counsellors, secondary school teachers and secondary school students who had not dropped out to returning students (or the data collected in Phases II and III). The first report dealt with Phase I and the third report will deal with Phases IV and V.

A literature review of a Canadian study and the small number of American studies which have been done on returning students was included in the first report (Larter & FitzGerald, 1978).

Purposes of Phases Two and Three of the Study

The purpose of phases two and three of the study was to investigate the attitudes of principals, vice-principals, guidance counsellors, teachers and regular students to returning students. More specifically, these people were asked to give their opinions, if any, about the best kind(s) of schooling for returning students, the reasons students return, the difficulties they have in returning, the problems they create for the schools upon returning, the problems they have in adjusting academically and socially, what is being done and what should be done about such problems, and the characteristics of returning students (e.g., work habits, maturity, need for guidance and school conduct).

METHOD

The Questionnaires

The questionnaire developed for students is shown in Appendix A. The one developed for principals, vice-principals, guidance counsellors and teachers is shown in Appendix B. The covering letters and the follow-up letter are given in Appendices C, D, and E.

The questionnaires were designed to provide the respondents with some structure and to stimulate their thoughts about some central themes while at the same time making it possible for them to offer ideas and opinions on related topics not specifically covered by the questions. Consequently, the questionnaires are a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire for students contains a higher proportion of closed-ended questions than the one for high school staff.

The topics covered by the two questionnaires are essentially the same:

(1) the best educational setting for returning students;
(2) the reasons students return to school;
(3) the problems students have when they decide to return to school;
(4) the problems the schools create for returning students;
(5) the problems returning students create for the schools;
(6) the solutions to the problems which exist;
(7) some characteristics of returning students.

The Sample

The Principals and Vice-Principals

The questionnaire was sent to 76 Toronto Secondary School principals and vice-principals. A total of 69 or 91% responded.

The Guidance Counsellors

Of the 139 Toronto Secondary School guidance counsellors/teachers who received the questionnaire, 117 or 84% responded.

The High School Teachers

A sample of high school teachers was chosen by selecting every tenth name from a computer list of all Toronto High School teachers. This exercise resulted in a sample of 213 teachers, 18 of whom were excluded because they were also on the list of guidance counsellors. Questionnaires were sent to the remaining 195 teachers -- 162 or 83% responded.

The Students

A sample of high school students was chosen by selecting every 100th name from a computer list of all Toronto Secondary School students. This exercise resulted in a sample of 338 students. A total of 229 or 68% returned questionnaires which were usable. Several students returned unanswered questionnaires saying that they could not respond because they did not know any students who had dropped out and returned to school.

Data Collection

The questionnaires for the five groups of people were packaged by school and mailed to the principals with directions for distribution on February 8, 1978. A month later, on March 8th, follow-up letters to those who had not responded, were mailed to the principals for distribution.

Data Analysis

The open-ended questions were hand coded by the research clerk. For some questions, coding was done twice since the fine categories used in the first coding were either too numerous or occurred too infrequently to be

useful -- broader categories were devised for the second coding.

Responses to the closed-ended questions were simply counted.

Frequency counts, converted to percentages and presented in tables, have been used to present the respondents' attitudes.

FINDINGS

Students' Attitudes Toward Returning Students

The Best Type of Schooling for Returnees

When the 229 secondary school students in this study were asked to indicate the best type of school setting for returning students, approximately four out of ten (43.2%) thought it depends on the individual students (see Table 1). Of these, some commented that the ideal type of schooling should be contingent on a number of factors such as the ages of the returnees, the duration of their absence, their employment status, their reasons for leaving school and their specific goals.

The second most frequently mentioned response was regular day school. Approximately one-fourth of the students considered it to be the most suitable educational setting for the returnees. The percentages of students who mentioned night school, part-time regular day school and work experience programs were only 9.6%, 8.3% and 7.0% respectively.

Reasons for Returning to Regular Day School

This section presents the students' perceptions of why dropout students return to regular day school. The students gave an average of 3.3 reasons each (see Table 2). Equally high percentages (68.1%) of students thought "the realization that dropping out was a mistake" and "unemployment" were the reasons accounting for the return of dropout students. The other reasons which were each mentioned by at least one-third of the student sample were "to learn a special trade," "they get bored with their work" and "their parents encourage them to return." The percentage distribution of the other reasons are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 1

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: BEST SETTING FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

Best Setting	Number of Students	Percentage of All Students* (N = 229)
It depends on the student	99	43.2%
Regular day school	59	25.8%
Night school	22	9.6%
Part-time regular day school	19	8.3%
Work experience programs	16	7.0%
Level 4 schools	14	6.1%
Separate classes in regular day schools	8	3.5%
Level 5 schools	7	3.1%
Alternative schools	7	3.1%
Level 1, 2 & 3 schools	6	2.6%
Correspondence courses	2	0.9%
Don't know/no opinion	5	2.2%
Miscellaneous	2	0.9%
No response	2	0.9%

* The column of percentages does not add up to 100% because some students mentioned more than one reason.

TABLE 2

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: REASONS DROPOUT STUDENTS RETURN TO REGULAR DAY SCHOOL

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of All Students* (N = 229)
They think dropping out was a mistake	156	68.1%
They can't find work	156	68.1%
To learn a special trade	100	43.7%
They get bored with their work	87	38.0%
Their parents encourage them to return	77	33.6%
To improve their reading, writing or math	66	28.8%
Their work doesn't pay enough	58	25.3%
Their employers encourage them to return	45	19.6%
Miscellaneous	13	5.7%
No response	1	0.4%

* The column of percentages does not add up to 100% because some students mentioned more than one reason.

The Ease of Re-entry to the Respondent's School

This section presents the students' perceptions about whether it is easy for a student who has dropped out to return to the respondent's school.

An examination of Table 3 shows that 44.9% of the respondents said "no," with the highest number (38.4%) focusing on the difficulty of adjustment and only 5.2% focussing on the difficulty of getting admitted. Among those who said "yes" (27.0%), the responses were quite evenly divided between those who thought it was easy to get adjusted (14.4%) and those who thought it was easy to get admitted (10.0%). Only 3.5% of the students took both aspects into consideration and thought readmission was no problem, while adjustment was difficult. There was a small group of students (8.7%) who found it difficult to generalize and thought it depends on the individual case.

TABLE 3

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: "IS IT EASY FOR A STUDENT WHO HAS DROPPED OUT TO RETURN TO YOUR SCHOOL?"

Responses	Number of Students		Percentage of All Students (N = 229)	
"No, difficult to get adjusted"	88		38.4%	
"No, difficult to get admitted"	12	103	5.2%	44.9%
"No," with no elaborations	3		1.3%	
"Yes, easy to get adjusted"	33		14.4%	
"Yes, easy to get admitted"	23	62	10.0%	27.0%
"Yes," with no elaborations	6		2.6%	
Easy to get admitted, but difficult to get adjusted		8		3.5%
Depends		20		8.7%
Don't know/undecided/irrelevant answer		28		12.2%
No response		8		3.5%
TOTAL		229		100%

The Problems Returning Students Encounter On Returning And How These Problems Can Be Dealt With

The responses of the students to these two questions are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Only 6 of the respondents thought returning students do not encounter problems on returning to school. The 190 students who thought returnees have problems suggested an average of two problems each.

It is apparent from Table 4 that three problems were mentioned with a much higher degree of frequency than any other problems. These are: (1) the catching up of schoolwork missed and forgotten, (2) readjustment to the school environment and (3) the older age and maturity of returning students.

TABLE 4

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD SUGGESTIONS OF PROBLEMS RETURNING STUDENTS ENCOUNTER

Problem	1st Suggestion		2nd Suggestion		3rd Suggestion	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Catching up with work missed/extra work/low marks	58	25.3%	23	10.0%	5	2.2%
Readjustment to school environment/homework/attendance/study habits/rules/less freedom	48	21.0%	38	16.6%	12	5.3%
Age gap/can't relate to younger kids/adapting to new friends	43	18.8%	30	13.1%	9	3.9%
Stigmatized as quitter/uncomfortable	20	8.7%	12	5.2%	7	3.1%
Hard time coping with teachers, principals	8	3.5%	10	4.4%	5	2.2%
Boredom, lack of interest	3	1.3%	5	2.2%	-	-
Financial problem	-	-	3	1.3%	3	1.3%
Miscellaneous problems	10	4.4%	3	1.3%	1	0.4%
No problem	6	2.6%	6	2.6%	6	2.6%
Depends	16	7.0%	16	7.0%	16	7.0%
Don't know	4	1.7%	4	1.7%	4	1.7%
No response	13	5.7%	79	34.5%	161	70.3%
TOTAL	229	100%	229	100%	229	100%

The following are some selected quotes from the students regarding the three problems mentioned above (grammatical errors have not been corrected):

"For English, some might easily forget the proper use. Typing: their speed would decrease. It actually would be a new start for someone who is not very intelligent."

"They have to get back into the school system. They don't have the 9 to 5 work day and then go out at night, but they go to school from 9 to 3, homework afterwards, plus examinations. Also another one, is that many don't like being bossed around by teachers. (If their boss bothers them they could always quit)."

> *"[The returnee is] older than most of his/her fellow students, rejected by his fellow students due to his maturity...becomes a social outcast...leads to depression for returning student."*

The majority of the students (66%) felt something could be done about the problems returning students encounter; however, as Table 5 indicates, no one solution was suggested by a large number of students. The two most frequently mentioned solutions were that the students should solve their own problems and the teachers should give more academic and psychological help. Very few students suggested a special class or help from other students and guidance counsellors; and, principals and vice-principals were rarely mentioned.

Apropos of the returning students solving their own problems, two students gave the following suggestions:

> *"Only he can solve his problem by coming to school daily and pay attention to their teachers."*

> *"Well, the person can try to adjust. First, by dealing with the other people around. Get involved in extra activities, so that they can know more people. Also he can involved in class discussion."*

Three typical quotations that pertain to the roles of the teachers and guidance counsellors in solving the problems returnees might face are as follows:

> *"The teachers could try to understand the student's situation and discourage any snickering kids in the class. Teachers could also meet the parents to tell them to encourage their kid to keep going to school."*

> *"Well, in the beginning of the year, if a teacher takes times to review the importance details of the prerequisite subject this might help the returning students, and the other students too."*

> *"Guidance counsellor could aid the returning students in working out a timetable for homework, have a talk with the teacher about the student."*

TABLE 5

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: "CAN ANYTHING BE DONE ABOUT ANY OF THESE PROBLEMS (STUDENTS ENCOUNTER ON RETURNING TO SCHOOL)?"

Response	Number of Students	Percentage of All Students* (N=229)
Yes (65.9%)		
Returnees could try harder to solve own problems	52	22.7%
Teachers could give extra help with course work/encouragement, attention	52	22.7%
Special class, course or program	29	12.7%
Other students and friends could be more patient, understanding and accepting	23	10.0%
Guidance counsellors could give extra advice, direction and encouragement	21	9.2%
Miscellaneous solutions	35	15.3%
No explanation	2	0.9%
No (12.7%)		
Can't force people to change attitude	4	1.7%
Can't resolve age difference	3	1.3%
Returnees must face consequences of dropping out	2	0.9%
Miscellaneous solutions	6	2.6%
No explanation	14	6.1%
Depends (2.2%)	5	2.2%
Don't know (3.1%)	7	3.1%
No response (16.2%)	37	16.2%

* This column of percentages exceeds 100% because some students gave more than one response.

Here is one suggestion that centers around the subject of special classes for returnees:

> *"Put all the students that quit school into one class and have a good teacher. They are more mature now, and it would be less embarrassing to them and they would want to learn."*

Finally, here is a representative view of how the students perceived they can help the returnees:

> *"Students could try and accept the returning students into their social groups."*

Twenty-nine students (12.7%) held a rather pessimistic view about the problems encountered by the returning students. They felt that nothing can be done to solve these problems. Almost half of them did not provide any reason to support their view. The few reasons provided are presented in Table 5.

The Problems Returning Students Create for the School and How These Problems Can be Dealt With

While slightly over half of the students participating in this study (55.5%) thought that returning students create problems for the schools, 22.7% felt that returnees do not (see Table 6). The latter group offered comments such as (the authors have underlined some words for emphasis):

> *"[The returnees] should not create much of a problem if they are really interested in returning."*

> *"I don't think they create any problems to the school. Except those guys that are forced by their parents to come to school."*

> *"I don't feel they create any problem at all, because they are usually more mature."*

> *"[They] may do good by encouraging other students not to drop out."*

TABLE 6

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: FIRST AND SECOND SUGGESTIONS OF PROBLEMS RETURNING STUDENTS MIGHT CREATE

Problem	1st Suggestion		2nd Suggestion	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Create more work/demand more time from school staff	36	15.7%	7	3.1%
Bad influence on other students	20	8.7%	2	0.9%
Disobey school rules/discipline problems	18	7.9%	4	1.7%
Disrupt classes/hinder academic progress	16	7.0%	3	1.3%
Skip classes/don't do homework	12	5.2%	6	2.6%
Hard on other students/don't socialize	6	2.6%	3	1.3%
Lack of school spirit, co-operation	5	2.2%	2	0.9%
Miscellaneous problems	14	6.1%	2	0.9%
No problem	52	22.7%	52	22.7%
Depends	9	3.9%	9	3.9%
No response	33	14.4%	131	57.2%
Don't know	8	3.5%	8	3.5%
TOTAL	229	100%	229	100%

The most common problem students thought returning students produce is the creation of extra work and the demand for more attention from the teaching and administrative staff (see Table 6). The following opinions of two students typify the way this was expressed:

> *"They just make extra work for the guidance counsellors and principals. Finding them a class in the middle of the year which they can suit. Making new files and records for them is a big load put onto the rest of their job."*

> *"The student demands more of the teacher's time and therefore the teacher doesn't have as much time for the other students."*

Setting bad examples for the other students, causing disciplinary problems and class disruptions and skipping classes were other problems less frequently mentioned by students. A representative sample of comments for these problems is:

> *"They [returning students] think they are hot shots. [They] start some bad habits he or she might often done before and then there will be students following and copying him/her."*
>
> *"Maybe a student who is returning as an adult might not want to obey the school rules, if he thinks they are childish. So he may be a discipline problem."*
>
> *"Sometimes they disturb the class because they are restless or not use to be in one place for a long period of time."*
>
> *"They may get into the habit of missing classes. [Because of this]they may get behind in their work and ask for help during class which slows down the teacher's lesson..."*

When students were asked if anything can be done about any of the problems created by the returnees, only 43.2% responded "yes" (see Table 7). A large percentage (38%) gave no response.

The solutions suggested tended to fall into three major groupings:

- help from the teaching staff and school administrators;
- self help;
- specific means and measures that all the parties involved could utilize to stem the problem, such as special classes for returning students and probation periods.

It is interesting to note how the response pattern for this question varies considerably from that of the previous question, in terms of the emphasis on the returnee's role in problem-solving. The suggestion that returnees should solve problems was much more frequently mentioned with reference to problems returnees might encounter (22.7%) than with reference to problems they might create (6.5%).

TABLE 7

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: "CAN ANYTHING BE DONE ABOUT ANY OF THESE PROBLEMS (RETURNING STUDENTS CREATE FOR THE SCHOOLS)?"

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students*(N=229)
Yes (43.2%)		
School staff can discuss problem, offer help, give special attention	47	20.5%
Special class, special program	19	8.3%
Returning students should help themselves	15	6.5%
Probation period, more selective in enrollment	10	4.4%
Miscellaneous solutions	14	6.1%
No (12.2%)		
School has limit to what it can do	4	1.7%
It just takes time for the problems to sort themselves out	3	1.3%
Other explanations	4	1.7%
No explanation	18	7.9%
Depends (1.7%)	4	1.7%
Don't know (4.8%)	11	4.8%
No response (38.0%)	87	38.0%

* This column of percentages exceeds 100% because some students gave more than one response.

Twenty-eight respondents (12.2%) held the view that nothing could be done about the problems.

People Who Help Returning Students

The major purpose of this section is to examine the students' perceptions of who gives help and who should give more help to returning students. Almost everyone responded to these two questions and each gave an average of 2.5 responses for each question. Approximately three-quarters (78.6%) of the students

felt that guidance counsellors give returning students a lot of help (see Table 8). Slightly more than half of the respondents thought classroom teachers (56.8%) and other students (54.1%) offer a great deal of help to returnees. A smaller proportion of students indicated that help for returning students comes from vice-principals (21.4%) and principals (15.7%).

Interestingly enough, those groups of people (guidance counsellors, teachers and other students) who were perceived by students as giving a lot of help to returnees, were also expected to give more help to returnees in addition to their present effort. As indicated in Table 9, the three leading groups of people students felt should offer more assistance to returnees were not vice-principals and principals, but rather classroom teachers (67.2%), guidance counsellors (55.9%) and other students (43.2%). Only one-fourth of the students felt that vice-principals (27.5%) and principals (22.7%) should give more help.

Characteristics of Returnees as Perceived by Students

To further assess the attitudes of students toward returnees, the respondents were asked to rate returnees against other students on nine items. The results are presented in Tables 10 to 18.

TABLE 8

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: "WHICH PEOPLE GIVE RETURNING STUDENTS A LOT OF HELP?"

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent (N = 229)*
Guidance counsellors	180	78.6%
Classroom teachers	130	56.8%
Other students	124	54.1%
Vice-principals	49	21.4%
Principals	36	15.7%
Family	18	7.9%
Friends	9	3.9%
Others	11	4.8%
Don't know	11	4.8%
No response	2	0.9%

* This column does not add to 100% because some students mentioned more than one person.

TABLE 9

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: "WHICH PEOPLE SHOULD GIVE RETURNING STUDENTS MORE HELP?"

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent (N = 229)*
Classroom teachers	154	67.2%
Guidance counsellors	128	55.9%
Other students	99	43.2%
Vice-principals	63	27.5%
Principals	52	22.7%
Family	18	7.9%
Friends	3	1.3%
Others	6	2.6%
Don't know	14	6.1%
No response	3	1.3%

* This column does not add to 100% because some students mentioned more than one person.

TABLE 10

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: WORK HABITS OF RETURNING STUDENTS

Response	Number	Per Cent
Better than other students	43	18.8%
About the same as other students	85	37.1%
Worse than other students	87	38.0%
Depends	6	2.6%
No response	8	3.5%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 11

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: MATURITY OF RETURNING STUDENTS

Response	Number	Per Cent
Less mature than other students	24	10.5%
About as mature as other students	81	35.4%
More mature than other students	111	48.5%
Depends	6	2.6%
No response	7	3.1%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 12

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: RETURNEES' EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENTION FROM TEACHERS

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students (N=229)
Expect more attention from teachers than other students	85	37.1%
Expect as much attention from teachers as other students	113	49.3%
Expect less attention from teachers than other students	20	8.7%
Depends	4	1.7%
No response	7	3.1%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 13

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: RETURNING STUDENTS' COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students (N=229)
Complain less about school than other students	101	44.1%
Complain about school about as much as other students	64	27.9%
Complain more about school than other students	53	23.1%
Depends	4	1.7%
No response	7	3.1%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 14

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY RETURNING STUDENTS

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students (N=229)
Cause more discipline problems than other students	46	20.1%
Cause as many discipline problems as other students	90	39.3%
Cause fewer discipline problems than other students	81	35.4%
Depends	3	1.3%
Don't know	1	0.4%
No response	8	3.5%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 15

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: HOW WELL RETURNEES FIT IN WITH THE OTHER STUDENTS DURING CLASS

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students (N=229)
Fit in well with the other students <u>during</u> class	112	48.9%
Don't fit in well with the other students <u>during</u> class	98	42.8%
Depends	2	0.9%
Same as others	3	1.3%
Don't know	2	0.9%
No response	12	5.2%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 16

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: THE MOTIVATION OF RETURNING STUDENTS

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students (N=229)
More motivated than other students	98	42.8%
About as motivated as other students	80	34.9%
Less motivated than other students	41	17.9%
Depends	1	0.4%
No response	9	3.9%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 17

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGES RETURNING STUDENTS DEMAND

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students (N=229)
Demand more special privileges than other students	50	21.8%
Demand about as many special privileges as other students	149	65.1%
Demand fewer special privileges than other students	21	9.2%
Depends	3	1.3%
No response	6	2.6%
TOTAL	229	100%

TABLE 18

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: THE SPECIAL GUIDANCE RETURNING STUDENTS NEED

Response	Number of Students	Per Cent of All Students (N=229)
Need less special guidance than other students	27	11.8%
Need as much special guidance as other students	59	25.8%
Need more special guidance than other students	134	58.5%
Depends	3	1.3%
No response	6	2.6%
TOTAL	229	100%

Summary

A sample of 229 Toronto Secondary School students who had never dropped out were asked to give their opinions about returning students through a questionnaire which was sent to them in February 1978. The following is a summary of their attitudes:

- the best kind of schooling for returning students would depend on the individual needs of the students (43%)*;
- the two major reasons for dropout students to return are (1) they think dropping out was a mistake (68%) and (2) they can't find work (68%);
- dropout students tend to find it difficult to return (45%) mainly because of the academic and social adjustments they have to make;
- returning students are very likely to encounter problems on returning to school (83%). The greatest academic and social problems they have to face are (1) to catch up with the work missed, (2) to get accustomed to the school environment again and (3) to relate to younger classmates;

* The percentages have been rounded off.

- returning students are somewhat likely to create problems for the schools (55%), the most frequent of which is the creation of more work for the staff;

- the problems returnees encounter and create can be resolved through the efforts of the returnees, school staff and other students, as well as special classes;

- the three groups of people who give returning students the most help are guidance counsellors (79%), classroom teachers (57%) and other students (54%);

- the three groups of people who should give more help to returning students are classroom teachers (67%), guidance counsellors (56%) and other students (43%);

- returning students demand as many special privileges as other students (65%);

- returning students need more special guidance than other students (59%);

- returning students are either more mature (49%) or about as mature as other students (35%);

- returning students expect either equal attention from teachers (49%) or more attention than other students (37%);

- returning students complain either less about school than other students (44%) or complain as much (28%);

- returning students are either more motivated than other students (43%) or just as motivated (35%);

- returning students cause either as many discipline problems as other students (39%) or fewer problems (35%);

- the work habits of returning students are either worse than other students (38%) or about the same as others (37%);

- students were divided in their opinions toward the returnees regarding the question of whether they fit in well with other students during class.

Attitudes of School Personnel Toward Returning Students

This section presents the opinions of the principals, vice-principals, guidance counsellors and secondary school teachers toward returning students.

Although the per cent distributions of the three subgroups (with the principals and vice-principals counted as one unit) as well as the totals will be presented in each table, the discussion of the findings will focus on the school personnel as a collective unit. Comparisons among the subgroups will be made only in cases where striking differences are found.

The Best Type of Schooling for Returnees

Slightly over three-quarters (77.9%) of the school personnel said that it is difficult to specify the best educational setting for a returning student without sufficient information on the individual such as his/her age, interests, abilities and motivation for returning (see Table 19).

Those who specified one or more settings tended to mention regular day school (17.2%) more often than the other types of settings. Part-time regular day school was the next most common setting mentioned by the school staff (10.1%). On the whole, the proportion of school staff who favoured the types of settings which enable the returnee to combine work with school was rather low.

Reasons for Returning to Regular Day School

When the school administrative and teaching staff were asked for reasons they thought returnees resume their education in regular day school, nearly everyone responded and many provided more than one reason (see Table 20). The desire to improve one's qualification for job advancement was the most frequently mentioned reason (72.4%). This broad category includes such specific ideas as the following:

TABLE 19

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: BEST EDUCATIONAL SETTING FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

Setting	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
Depends on student	78.2%	78.6%	77.2%	77.9%
Regular day school	20.3%	12.8%	19.1%	17.2%
Part-time regular day school	5.8%	11.1%	11.1%	10.1%
Night school	4.3%	6.0%	6.2%	5.7%
Work experience program	1.4%	6.0%	6.8%	5.5%
Separate classes in regular day school	2.9%	2.6%	5.6%	4.0%
Alternative schools	1.4%	3.4%	4.3%	3.4%
Level 4 schools	1.4%	1.7%	3.1%	2.3%
Level 5 schools	1.4%	1.7%	1.2%	1.4%
Correspondence courses	-	2.5%	0.6%	1.1%
Level 1, 2 & 3 schools	1.4%	0.8%	0.6%	0.9%
Miscellaneous settings	2.9%	2.6%	2.5%	2.6%
Don't know	-	-	1.8%	0.9
No response	-	-	4.9%	2.3%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

TABLE 20

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: REASONS DROPOUT STUDENTS RETURN TO REGULAR DAY SCHOOL

Reason	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
Desire to improve qualifications for better job/ see education as means to achieve goals	78.3%	82.9%	62.3%	72.4%
No work/unemployed/boredom/nothing better to do	58.0%	66.7%	60.5%	62.1%
Disenchantment with employment/dissatisfied with working conditions/dislike work and responsibilities	23.2%	45.3%	31.5%	34.5%
Has matured/more mature attitude toward school	14.5%	17.1%	38.3%	26.4%
Parental pressure/encouragement	21.7%	28.2%	12.3%	19.5%
Miss friends/social life of school	14.5%	19.7%	20.4%	19.0%
To get welfare	8.7%	8.5%	6.2%	7.5%
Miscellaneous reasons	56.5%	49.6%	33.9%	43.7%
No response	2.9%	-	0.6%	0.9%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

- getting more credits;
- going to university or college;
- making oneself more employable;
- getting a better job;
- improving the chance of job promotion;
- seeing the need for more education;
- realizing that education=money=success; and,
- the crystallisation of goals which require a certain level of education to achieve.

Table 20 shows that 62.1% of the school personnel thought unemployment and boredom are reasons that prompt the students to return. The responses in this category encompass a variety of ideas, such as:

- unable to find any job;
- unable to find a suitable job;
- unable to find regular, full-time employment;
- unable to keep the job;
- fired;
- laid off;
- no jobs available due to the state of the economy;
- bored and need something to do; and,
- nothing else to do.

The other two reasons that were each suggested by at least one-quarter of the respondents were disenchantment with work (34.5%) and maturity of the students (26.4%). The former covers related concepts such as:

- finding the work world more difficult to cope with than school;
- dissatisfaction with their present job situation regarding income, nature of work and their boss;
- discovery of the unacceptable aspects of the adult world;
- the feeling of inadequacy and frustration arising from work; and
- dislike of the harsh demand and pressure of work.

The latter covers:

- the work world has caused the student to grow up and enabled him to better cope with the demands of school;
- maturity makes them realize the limits on personal growth without education; and
- maturity has changed their attitude toward education, hence reason for attending school.

Also noted as reasons were parental pressure, missing friends and social life of school and to get welfare.

The Ease of Re-entry to the Respondent's School

When the school staff were asked whether or not they felt it is easy for students who have dropped out to resume education at their school, the following breakdown of replies was obtained: 76.1% said "yes," 12.6% said "no," 7.5% said "yes and no" and 3.7% gave no response (see Table 21).

Almost one-quarter (23.0%) of all the school personnel reported that flexible, individualized timetables facilitate the return of drop-out students. Some of the respondents who gave this reason elaborated on the type of special timetable their school provides; for example, "our school provides partial timetables where appropriate to accommodate part-time employment."

The placement of returning students into suitable programs tailored to their specific needs was also a common reason (20.7%) given for ease of the students' return. The following two quotes illustrate more specifically what this category means:

> *"Attempts are made to design a program within the limitations of a collegiate which will help the student achieve his goals in the shortest possible time. Prerequisites are not rigidly held to."*

> *"Students can either have a completely academic or a heavily commercial program or a mixture."*

The offer of counselling regarding social and academic adjustment in the school milieu, career planning and support in periods of stress constituted the third most common reason the school authorities felt it is easy for dropout students to return. The other less frequently menticned reasons are also listed in Table 21.

TABLE 21

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "IS IT EASY FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE DROPPED OUT TO RESUME THEIR EDUCATION AT YOUR SCHOOL?"

Response	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
Yes	75.4%	81.2%	72.8%	76.1%
Flexible, individualized timetable	30.4%	31.6%	13.6%	23.0%
Placed in suitable program tailored to student's needs	27.5%	23.9%	15.4%	20.7%
Counselling, support, encouragement	13.0%	25.6%	12.3%	16.9%
Nothing special/treated as ordinary students	10.1%	10.2%	9.3%	9.8%
Open door policy/no restriction on returning	7.2%	12.8%	8.0%	9.5%
Pre-enrolment interview to assess student's intention/goals	18.8%	8.5%	3.1%	8.0%
Extra help/remedial help from teachers	8.7%	5.1%	9.3%	7.8%
Follow-up/monitor progress	2.9%	11.1%	1.2%	4.9%
Miscellaneous reasons	14.5%	32.5%	15.4%	21.0%
No	4.3%	8.5%	19.1%	12.6%
Don't fit in/not accepted by younger students	7.2%	5.1%	9.2%	7.5%
Difficult to get adjusted academically/school routine/work missed	4.3%	6.0%	9.3%	7.2%
Miscellaneous reasons	13.0%	11.1%	7.4%	9.8%
Yes and No**	20.3%	6.8%	2.5%	7.5%
No Response	-	3.5%	5.5%	3.7%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

** The reasons for "yes and no" were classified separately under the "yes" and "no" categories.

It is interesting to note how the specific roles of each individual group affect the response patterns. For instance, the setting up of an individualized timetable and a suitable program for the returning student are often the responsibilities of the guidance counsellors and/or the vice-principals and principals, and this is reflected in the response patterns in the form of higher percentages for these two groups as compared to the teachers. Another example is the higher percentage of guidance counsellors mentioning the availability of counselling, support and encouragement as compared to the other two groups of school personnel.

Those who felt it is not easy for returning students to resume their education tended to substantiate their position with the following two reasons: difficulty in gaining social acceptance from the younger students (7.5%) and difficulty in getting academically adjusted (7.2%).

The Problems Returning Students Have in Adjusting Academically

About half (53.7%) of the respondents believed that returning students have problems adjusting academically (see Table 22). The greatest difficulty in adjusting to the academic setting, as perceived by the school personnel (28.2%), is the establishment of good study habits after a drastic change of life style. As one teacher explained: "They have become used to having their evenings free for leisure, therefore doing homework and studying for exams in the evenings is very difficult for most returning students." Putting it differently, one of the principals said, "It is presently not so much a problem of adjusting to the school milieu as it is to breaking with some of the social patterns established while out of school."

The shift from the relatively unstructured day away from school to the highly structured school day characterized by "the 40 minute periods and a non-changing routine" was mentioned by 15.5% of the school staff as another academic problem returning students have to face.

TABLE 22

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "DO RETURNING STUDENTS HAVE SPECIAL PROBLEMS ADJUSTING ACADEMICALLY AFTER THEY RETURN?"

Response	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
Yes	46.4%	61.5%	51.2%	53.7%
Study habits/homework/exams/less leisure in the evenings	27.5%	39.3%	20.4%	28.2%
Rigid school routine/timetable/attendance/ punctuality	20.3%	18.8%	11.1%	15.5%
Missed/forgotten basic concepts, skills/ need review/catching up	13.0%	17.1%	15.4%	15.5%
Previous academic problems/bad behaviour patterns persist	11.6%	9.4%	7.4%	8.9%
Rules/classroom discipline/obeying teachers/ less freedom	11.6%	6.0%	4.9%	6.6%
Miscellaneous problems	24.6%	35.9%	15.4%	24.1%
No	27.5%	24.8%	36.4%	30.7%
Yes and No	20.3%	7.7%	4.3%	8.6%
No Response/Not Sure/Don't Know	5.8%	6.0%	8.0%	6.9%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% became some respondents gave more than one response.

Another problem that was reported by 15.5% of the respondents was the need to review the basic concepts and skills missed or forgotten during their absence. Here is a typical response: "Maths and science programmes are changing rapidly, [returning] students have gaps in knowledge."

The other less frequently mentioned problems are listed in Table 22.

The Problems Returning Students Have in Adjusting Socially

Table 23 shows what the school personnel thought were the typical problems returning students face in making their social adjustment. About one-third (35.3%) of all the respondents considered the age disparity between the returning students and the regular students a special problem. The difficulty of relating to the less mature, younger students is illustrated in the following quotation:

> *"If students come back after several years away, they often find it discouraging to 'put up with' the childishness and mischievousness of the young students."*

Another aspect of this problem is the difference in interests, outlook and experience which tends to hinder the building of friendships between the two groups. As a guidance counsellor aptly put it:

> *"They [the returning students] find that they have matured while they were working and that the maturity of students who never dropped out remained the same, i.e., talking about dances, sports, etc."*

About one-tenth (10.6%) thought the lack of acceptance by tightly-knit groups and a feeling of isolation is a problem. This problem was depicted by two teachers in the following manner:

> *"Students at senior level tend to have long established their groups and maintain them for academic, as well as social pursuits."*
>
> *"Class coherence tends to grow as time progresses. Naturally a student may feel left out for a while, because of a slightly different past."*

TABLE 23

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "DO RETURNING STUDENTS HAVE SPECIAL PROBLEMS ADJUSTING SOCIALLY AFTER THEY RETURN?"

Responses	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
Yes	31.9%	46.1%	44.4%	42.5%
Older, more mature/can't tolerate childish behaviour of others/different interests, outlook, experience	33.3%	42.7%	30.9%	35.3%
Cliques/close knit groups/isolation	5.8%	12.8%	11.1%	10.6%
Old friends have left/a few grades ahead	5.8%	9.4%	5.5%	6.9%
Lack of participation in extra-curricular activities, student government, sports, social functions	1.4%	6.8%	1.2%	3.2%
Miscellaneous problems	20.3%	25.6%	12.7%	18.7%
No	36.2%	36.7%	41.4%	38.8%
Yes and No/Sometimes/Maybe	21.7%	8.6%	4.9%	9.5%
No Response/Can't Say/Don't Know	10.1%	8.6%	9.3%	9.2%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

The other less frequently mentioned problems are listed in Table 23.

Table 23 also indicates that the proportion of respondents who thought that returning students do not encounter social adjustment problems (38.8%) was almost as high as the proportion who felt returning students do (42.5%).

A comparison of this table with the previous one on the proportion of respondents who said "yes" to whether returnees encounter academic problems reveals that slightly more school personnel felt returning students encounter academic (53.7%) than social adjustment problems (42.5%) on returning.

Work Habits of Returning Students

The ratings of the school personnel on the work habits of returning students are shown in Table 24. It shows that almost half of the respondents (47.7%) felt that the returning students' work habits cannot be described in general. From the comments some of the respondents gave, it seems that they think the returning students are rather heterogeneous in terms of age, motivation, reasons for leaving, reasons for returning and previous work habits, hence making generalization rather difficult.

Very few responses fell in the two extreme categories. None rated returning students' work habits as "exceptional" and only 1.1% of the school staff judged them as "very poor." The frequency distribution for the "above average," "average" and "below average" categories were 18.7%, 12.6% and 9.5% respectively.

The major theme of the positive comments which accompanied the rating of the returning students' work habits was that such students tend to be highly motivated, more mature and more goal-oriented. In addition, there were a few who commented to the effect that the system tends to retain those returning students with good study habits and force those with bad work habits to drop out again.*

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* The number of respondents who gave additional comments to support their answers for questions 6, 7 and 8 was negligible, hence comments for these questions were not presented in tabular form.

TABLE 24

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: WORK HABITS OF RETURNING STUDENTS

Rating	Principals (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors (N=117)	Teachers (N=162)	Total (N=348)
Exceptional	-	-	-	-
Above Average	17.4%	15.4%	21.6%	18.7%
Average	15.9%	11.1%	12.3%	12.6%
Below Average	8.7%	8.5%	10.5%	9.5%
Very Poor	-	0.8%	1.8%	1.1%
Can't Be Described in General	47.8%	56.4%	41.4%	47.7%
No Opinion	4.3%	4.3%	4.9%	4.6%
No Response	5.8%	3.4%	7.4%	5.7%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Those who commented negatively on the work habits of the returning students tended to focus on the students' wrong reasons for returning, such as court pressures, welfare purposes, and missing the social life of school. The failure to develop good study habits before dropping out was regarded as another underlying factor for the students' poor habits upon returning.

Returning Students' Motivation to Learn

In response to the question, "In general, how would you describe returning students' motivation to learn?", approximately one-third (36.2%) said "can't be described in general" and another one-third (35.9%) said "above average." The percentage breakdown of the other categories are provided in Table 25. It is apparent from the data that the proportion of school staff who gave a favourable assessment of the returning students' motivation to learn was far greater than those who gave a negative assessment.

TABLE 25

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: RETURNING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN

Rating	Principals (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors (N=117)	Teachers (N=162)	Total (N=348)
Exceptional	-	1.7%	1.2%	1.1%
Above Average	30.4%	38.5%	36.4%	35.9%
Average	14.5%	10.3%	10.5%	11.2%
Below Average	2.9%	6.0%	4.9%	4.9%
Very Poor	-	-	1.8%	0.9%
Can't Be Described in General	37.7%	39.3%	33.3%	36.2%
No Opinion	2.9%	1.7%	4.9%	3.4%
No Response	11.6%	2.6%	6.8%	6.3%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

An examination of the comments given by a few of the respondents provides some further insight into this subject. Although many respondents felt that returning students have an "above average" level of motivation to learn, some (21) qualified their answers by pointing out that the students' high motivation is "likely to wear off after a while." A few commented that a high level of motivation alone does not mean academic success, and that returnees often lack the good work habits, self-discipline and perseverance to convert their motivation into success. Such a comment seems to reinforce the findings in Tables 24 and 25 in which the combined percentage of school staff who judged returnees' level of motivation as "above average" and "exceptional" was 37.0%, whereas the combined per cent who judged returnees as having the corresponding levels of work habits was only 18.7%. The findings from these two tables can thus be translated to mean that the school staff are more likely to think that returning students are highly motivated than they are to think they have good work habits.

Since those comments justifying the positive, negative and indecisive responses were similar and, in most cases, identical to those of the previous question on work habits, they will not be discussed again in this section.

Returning Students' Conduct in School

With regard to the returnees' conduct in school, one-third (33.0%) of the school staff did not want to make generalizations, while another one-third (33.0%) assessed them as "above average" (see Table 26). About one-fifth (21.5%) felt their conduct was "average". The percentages for "exceptional" and "below average" were each 2.6%. None of the respondents evaluated the returnees' conduct as "very poor."

TABLE 26

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: RETURNING STUDENTS' CONDUCT IN SCHOOL

Rating	Principals (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors (N=117)	Teachers (N=162)	Total (N=348)
Exceptional	-	3.4%	3.1%	2.6%
Above Average	39.1%	29.9%	32.7%	33.0%
Average	27.5%	17.9%	21.6%	21.5%
Below Average	1.4%	3.4%	2.5%	2.6%
Very Poor	-	-	-	-
Can't Be Described in General	21.7%	42.7%	30.9%	33.0%
No Opinion	2.9%	2.6%	3.7%	3.2%
No Response	7.2%		5.5%	4.0%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

From the few comments provided one can sort out a few ideas that explain why some school staff rated the school conduct of returnees as favourable. The returnees were perceived as -

(1) more mature and hence more responsive to rules;
(2) more likely to be looked up to by younger students as a model due to their age and maturity;
(3) more serious about school; and,
(4) more likely to be quiet and withdrawn and hence no disciplinary problem.

There were also a few negative comments concerning the returning students' conduct in school. The types of undesirable conduct mentioned were poor attendance, trying to impress younger classmates with a "know-it-all" attitude, demand of special treatment from teachers, lack of participation in school activities, and getting impatient with irrelevant subject material.

Those who could not generalize felt that the returnees' conduct in school is dependent on the reasons for returning, the ages of the students, their abilities to adjust academically and socially, their levels of maturity, their prior experiences in school and their understandings of the main purposes of high school.

Returning Students' Demand For Special Privileges

This study also attempted to find out whether school personnel felt that returnees demand more special privileges than other students. Approximately three out of five respondents (64.1%) answered "no," and one-fourth (27.3%) said "yes" (see Table 27). The percent distribution of the five major types of special privileges the school personnel who answered "yes" described are presented in Table 27.

Returning Students' Need for Special Guidance or Direction

When the school personnel were asked if they thought returning students need special guidance or direction, 57.2% felt they do, while 28.4% felt they do not (see Table 28).

TABLE 27

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "ARE RETURNING STUDENTS MORE LIKELY THAN OTHER STUDENTS TO DEMAND SPECIAL PRIVILEGES?"

Responses	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
No	68.1%	63.2%	63.0%	64.1%
Yes	27.5%	28.2%	26.5%	27.3%
Special treatment re: attendance/absenteeism/ homework deadlines/make-up exams	11.6%	11.1%	8.0%	9.8%
Special timetable	8.7%	15.4%	4.9%	9.2%
Want to be treated as adults/challenge rules of school	7.2%	6.0%	9.3%	7.8%
Extra help, attention from teachers and guidance counsellors	5.8%	4.3%	7.4%	6.0%
Special treatment re: course load/prerequisites/ subject selection/evaluation	2.9%	12.0%	2.5%	5.7%
Miscellaneous privileges	5.8%	6.8%	1.8%	4.3%
Yes and No/Depends	-	2.6%	0.6%	1.1%
No Response/Don't Know/Not Sure	4.3%	6.0%	9.9%	7.5%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

TABLE 28

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "DO RETURNING STUDENTS NEED SPECIAL GUIDANCE OR DIRECTION?"

Responses	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
Yes	56.5%	66.7%	50.6%	57.2%
Advice on academic adjustment/hints on how to study, organize time	14.5%	26.5%	9.9%	16.4%
Define, clarify realistic goals/assess reason for returning	15.9%	19.6%	13.0%	15.8%
Help to select courses/map out suitable program	17.4%	21.4%	8.0%	14.4%
Encouragement/concern/support/reassurance	10.1%	18.8%	12.3%	14.1%
Career planning/information on job opportunities, other educational alternatives	5.8%	23.1%	3.7%	10.6%
Help with poor self image/social adjustments	4.3%	12.0%	4.9%	7.2%
Extra classroom help/individual instruction from teachers	2.9%	1.7%	8.0%	4.9%
Follow-up/monitor progress	2.9%	6.0%	2.5%	3.7%
Help with timetable changes to accommodate other commitments	4.3%	7.7%	-	3.4%
Miscellaneous needs	5.8%	13.7%	7.4%	9.2%
No	27.5%	21.4%	33.9%	28.4%
Yes and No/Maybe/Sometimes	4.3%	4.3%	2.5%	3.4%
No Response/Don't Know/Not Sure	11.6%	7.7%	13.0%	10.9%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

The types of special assistance each mentioned by at least 10% of the school personnel were advice on academic adjustment (16.4%), clarification of long and short-term goals (15.8%), selection of suitable courses (14.4%), encouragement and support (14.1%) and career planning (10.6%).

The following are some representative quotes for each type of help just mentioned:

> *[They need advice on] "how to study, keep a notebook, prepare for a test, budget their time" and "help in re-adjusting to an academic routine and in living with some degree of regimentation which most schools require."*
>
> *[They need help on] "evaluation of reasons for dropping out, evaluation of reasons for returning, establishment of priorities for the next term, establishment of a reasonably accessible objective in marks and achievement..."*
>
> *[They need] "assistance in choosing courses to meet career goals or requirement for post-secondary education."*
>
> *[They] "need encouragement that it is possible to get a high school diploma, need assurance that they can accomplish the goals they have" and "positive support for the decision to return."*
>
> *[They need] "guidance in career planning, further education (i.e., community college, university programs) and employment opportunities."*

<u>The Problems Returning Students Create for Other Students</u>

Only a small proportion of the school staff in this study (8.9%) felt that returning students create problems for other students. Approximately three-quarters of them (74.1%) felt returnees do not cause problems (see Table 29). Among those who responded "no," there were a few who commented to the effect that returnees have a beneficial effect on the other students due to their ability to relate to the outside world and that their industriousness often becomes an incentive to the others.

TABLE 29

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "DO RETURNING STUDENTS CREATE PROBLEMS FOR OTHER STUDENTS?"

Responses	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
No	79.7%	72.6%	72.8%	74.1%
Yes**	4.3%	8.5%	11.1%	8.9%
Set bad examples in punctuality/attendance/ discipline/work habits/negative attitude	5.8%	7.7%	4.9%	6.0%
Other students resent returnees' aloofness/ overbearing attitude/sense of superiority	2.9%	4.3%	2.5%	3.2%
Other students resent returnees' demand for extra help and attention	-	3.4%	3.1%	2.6%
Miscellaneous problems	2.9%	1.7%	2.5%	2.3%
Yes and No/Sometimes	7.2%	4.3%	0.6%	3.2%
No Response/Don't Know/Not Sure	8.7%	14.5%	15.4%	13.8%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

** The problems listed under the "Yes" category also include those accompanying the "Yes and No" responses.

Other Problems Returning Students Create for the Schools

Only one-fifth (19.8%) of the school personnel named other problems they felt returning students create for the schools. These are tabulated in Table 30.

According to Table 30, the leading problem returning students create for the schools is the creation of extra work (11.2%) which ranges from placing them in suitable programs, special timetabling and extra paper work to increasing the work loads of teachers.

Among those who believed that returning students do not create any problems for the schools, there were 12 who commented favourably about the returnees. They perceived returnees as model students who tend to have a positive influence on the other students because of their high level of motivation, good work habits and attendance.

Other Things Schools Could Do For Returning Students

Almost half of the respondents (46.3%) did not answer this question. Of the remaining 53.7% who responded, 40.5% said "yes" (see Table 31). Five types of special services were suggested by those who would like to see their school do something for the returnees.

Approximately 10% proposed various types of group counselling including sessions to discuss mutual problems faced by returnees, discussions to help would-be dropouts using returnees as resource persons, career counselling and exploration about different possibilities. In addition, individual supportive counselling was also suggested by a few. The following are a few quotes that provide a more detailed look at this category of suggestions:

"Group meetings at regular intervals with all returning students to discuss mutual problems and suggest possible solutions. Mini-career planning sessions for all returnees to assist in setting and working towards obtainable goals."

"Group counselling might be useful so that students could experience some peer support in re-adjusting to school life - topics such as study skills, note-taking, essay writing, social adjustment could be valuable."

"Set up special counselling schedules, prepare list of tutors, seminars on returning to school, be able to use them [returnees] as a resource person when counselling other students who are considering dropping out."

Work-oriented programs were mentioned by 9.5% of the school staff as a special type of service they would like their school to promote. Work Experience programs in particular, were mentioned several times. Other suggestions along the same line were the offer of a better job placement service for returnees, as well as special timetabling that will enable the combination of work with school. Two of the respondents expressed their wishes this way:

"I would like to see an expanded Work Experience Program and a job placement service run on a full-time basis by a person with experience in industry and who knows the abilities of the individuals and who can assess their weaknesses or correct them."

"I would like to have the facilities to offer returning students more work-oriented programs. In some cases the students dropped out because they couldn't see the relevance of the academic program and returning to the same situation is often not very satisfactory."

Another measure proposed by 8.6% of the respondents was special classes for returnees. Suggestions of a similar nature under this category included separate classes for returning students, tutoring, remedial classes and refresher courses. Here are three suggestions from the staff:

TABLE 30

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "DO RETURNING STUDENTS CREATE ANY OTHER PROBLEMS FOR YOUR SCHOOL?"

Responses	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
No	39.1%	42.7%	41.4%	41.4%
Yes	27.5%	20.5%	16.0%	19.8%
Extra work for staff/time-consuming to place them/special timetable	17.4%	11.1%	8.6%	11.2%
Bad attendance /poor work habits/discipline problem/negative attitude/no participation	10.1%	7.7%	8.6%	8.6%
Tendency to drop out again/influence others to drop out	-	2.6%	1.8%	1.7%
Special privileges/other students request same privileges	-	1.7%	1.2%	1.1%
Miscellaneous problems	7.2%	-	3.1%	2.9%
Yes and No/Depends	1.4%	3.4%	1.2%	2.0%
No Response/Can't Say/Don't Know	31.9%	33.3%	41.4%	36.8%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

TABLE 31

RESPONSES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL: "ARE THERE ANY OTHER THINGS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOUR SCHOOL DO FOR RETURNING STUDENTS?"

Responses	Principals* (N=69)	Guid. Counsellors* (N=117)	Teachers* (N=162)	Total* (N=348)
Yes	43.5%	39.3%	40.1%	40.5%
Group counselling sessions to discuss common problems/individual counselling	11.6%	11.1%	8.6%	10.1%
Work-oriented program/job placement service/ special timetabling	8.7%	13.7%	6.8%	9.5%
Special class/remedial class/tutoring/ refresher course	7.2%	12.0%	6.8%	8.6%
Follow-up program/monitoring progress	2.9%	6.0%	2.5%	3.7%
Make teachers more aware of returnees	-	-	8.0%	3.7%
Miscellaneous suggestions	14.5%	9.4%	9.9%	10.6%
No/None	5.8%	16.2%	14.2%	13.2%
No Response/Don't Know	50.7%	44.4%	45.7%	46.3%

* The columns of percentages do not add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response.

"Perhaps refresher courses could be offered in some skills subjects, e.g., math, language, typing."

"Perhaps like 'Operation Catchup' in York County, we could have individuals tutoring part of the day to 'ease' student back in and help strengthen his weak areas."

"If numbers warrant it, they might do better in classes with those in the 'same boat,' rather than to be dropped into regular classes."

The other suggestion made by all three groups of school staff was to set up follow-up programs to periodically monitor the returnee's progress (3.7%).

The one suggestion that was cited by the teachers alone was to increase the teachers' level of awareness about returning students so that necessary help, encouragement and support could be offered (3.7%). Common statements from the teachers were:

"I would like to be given names of returning students, along with some data on these students. Under the present system this information is given only informally. Often teachers are unaware that a student has been out of school at all."

"All that is really necessary is a knowledge through guidance which will enable the classroom teachers to be aware of who is a returning student. The teacher can [then] spend the necessary time developing rapport and encouraging the student..."

Just a few of those who responded "no" to the question gave comments to substantiate their answers. The two most common reasons for not wanting the school to do more for the returning students were:

(1) there is no need for special services either because the existing facilities are adequate or that the population of the returnees is not large enough to warrant any special program; and,

(2) there is not enough resources and manpower to offer extra services to the returnees.

Summary

A total of 348 personnel from Toronto Secondary Schools responded to a questionnaire designed to elicit their opinions about returning students. The following is a summary of the perceptions of the principals (and vice-principals), guidance counsellors and a sample of secondary school teachers based on the data presented in this section. Collectively, they felt that:

- the best kind of educational setting for returnees would depend on the individual (78%)*;
- the two most common reasons for returning students resuming their education are (1) the desire to improve their qualifications for better jobs and (2) unemployment;
- dropout students tend to find it easy to return (76%) mainly because of the availability of facilities such as (1) special timetabling, (2) careful placement of returnees into suitable programs and (3) the availability of counselling services;
- returnees are likely to encounter problems in their academic adjustment (54%). The three major problems they face are (1) to acquire good study habits, (2) to get accustomed to the rigid school routine and (3) to catch up with the work missed;
- returnees are somewhat likely to encounter problems in their social adjustment (42%). The leading problem is difficulty of fitting in with the regular students due to age disparity;
- the work habits of returning students are too diverse to be described in general (48%);
- the returning students' motivation to learn is either difficult to generalize (36%) or above average (36%);
- the returning students' conduct in school is either hard to describe in general (33%) or above average (33%);
- returnees tend <u>not</u> to demand special privileges more than other students (64%);
- returnees are likely to need a wide variety of guidance services from the school (57%);

* The percentages have been rounded off.

- returnees are not likely to create problems for the other students (74%),

- returnees tend not to create problems for the school (41%), but when they do (20%), they tend to cause extra work for the staff in terms of placement, timetabling, tutoring and counselling.

- the school should do more for the returning students (40%) by having facilities such as group and individual counselling, work-oriented programs, special classes, follow-up programs and making teachers more aware of returnees.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This report is the second of three reports on returning students. It presents the attitudes of regular students, principals, vice-principals, guidance counsellors and teachers to their return.

While separate summaries on the attitudes of the students and school personnel have been provided on pages 23 to 24 and 49 to 50, this final summary is presented to highlight some of the major themes in more general terms.

The leading answer from both the student body and the school personnel regarding the best form of education for the returnees was "it depends on the students." The proportions of both groups who cited settings that would enhance the combination of work with school for returnees such as night school, part-time regular day school and work experience programs were low.

The majority of the students and school staff thought dropout students return because of unemployment, the desire to improve their qualifications for better jobs and the realization that dropping out was a mistake.

The students' perception of whether it is easy for dropout students to return to school varied considerably from that of the school authorities. The students tended to feel it is <u>not</u> easy while the school authorities tended to think it is easy. The students who thought it is difficult for dropout students to return emphasized the many academic and social adjustments returnees have to make, whereas the school authorities who thought it is easy to return emphasized the availability of facilities such as special timetabling, careful placement of returnees into suitable programs and the availability of counselling services.

Although students were more apt to feel that returnees might experience academic and social problems upon returning than the staff, the staff, however, when they did describe academic and social problems, highlighted the same ones. Both staff and students mentioned that the need to catch up with the schoolwork missed and re-adjustment to the school environment are the major academic problems returnees might encounter. There was also frequent reference by both staff and students to the social problems they believed the returnees experience as a result of the disparity between their ages and the ages of the other students.

When asked to describe the work habits, level of maturity, motivation and conduct of the returnees, the school staff were much more cautious than students in forming opinions. For those school staff who were willing to generalize, their opinions were rather similar to those of the students. They both had rather favourable attitudes toward the returnees' motivation to learn, level of maturity and their conduct in school, but were less impressed by their work habits.

With reference to the questions of whether returning students are more likely than others to demand special privileges and need more special guidance and direction, both staff and students see the returnees as tending not to ask for more special privileges but tending to need more special guidance and direction.

Most of the school personnel did not describe any kind of problems returning students might create for either other students or for the school in general. A few did feel returning students create extra work for the staff. In contrast, just over half of the students felt returning students create problems. They depicted a variety of problems but also mentioned the extra work most frequently.

Approximately 40% of the school personnel offered suggestions that the school system might employ to help returning students. Their ideas included (1) group and individual counselling, (2) work-oriented programs, (3) special classes,(4) follow-up programs and (5) making teachers more aware of returnees.

The students were also asked to suggest ways the school system might help returning students. A few mentioned special classes but the majority tended to say that the school staff, particularly teachers and guidance counsellors, other students and the returnees themselves should help -- they provided very few details.

REFERENCES

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Larter, S., & FitzGerald, J. Study of returning students: Part I - Some descriptive characteristics. Toronto: The Board of Education for the City of Toronto, Research Department, 1978 (#148).

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire About Returning Students
Completed by
Students Who Had Not
Dropped Out

STUDY OF
RETURNING STUDENTS

Research Department

Board of Education for the City of Toronto

Questionnaire

for

Students Who Have Never Dropped Out

1. What do you think is the best type of schooling for a returning student?

_____ a) *regular day school*
_____ b) *part-time regular day school*
_____ c) *work experience programs*
_____ d) *night school*
_____ e) *correspondence courses*
_____ f) *level 1, 2, 3 schools*
_____ g) *level 4 schools*
_____ h) *level 5 schools*
_____ i) *alternative schools such as CONTACT*
_____ j) *separate classes in regular day schools*
_____ k) *it depends on the student*
_____ l) *don't know, or no opinion*
_____ m) *other (please specify)*

_____

_____

2. Why do you think students who have dropped out return to <u>regular day school</u>? (Check as many answers as you like)

____ a) *they can't find work*
____ b) *they get bored with their work*
____ c) *their work doesn't pay enough*
____ d) *to improve their reading, writing, or math*
____ e) *to learn a special trade*
____ f) *their employers encourage them to return*
____ g) *their parents encourage them to return*
____ h) *they think dropping out was a mistake*
____ i) *other (please specify)*

_____

3. Is it easy for a student who has dropped out to return to YOUR school? If you answer YES, please explain why it's easy. If you answer NO, please explain why it's not.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What problems, if any, do students encounter on returning to school?

5. Can anything be done about any of these problems?

6. What problems, if any, do returning students create for the schools?

7. Can anything be done about any of these problems?

8. Which people give returning students a lot of help? (Check as many as you like)

____ a) guidance counsellors
____ b) principals
____ c) vice-principals
____ d) classroom teachers
____ e) other students
____ f) don't know
____ g) others (please specify)

_____

9. Which people should give returning students more help? (Check as many as you like)

____ a) guidance counsellors
____ b) principals
____ c) vice-principals
____ d) classroom teachers
____ e) other students
____ f) don't know
____ g) others (please specify)

_____

Please put an X in the space beside the word or phrase which best completes each of the following sentences:

10. The work habits of returning students are:

____ better than other students'
____ about the same as other students'
____ worse than other students'

11. Returning students are:

____ less mature than other students
____ about as mature as other students
____ more mature than other students

12. Returning students expect:

____ more attention from teachers than other students do
____ about as much attention from teachers as other students do
____ less attention from teachers than other students do

13. Returning students:

____ *complain less about school than other students do*
____ *complain about school about as much as other students do*
____ *complain more about school than other students do*

14. Returning students:

____ *cause more discipline problems than other students do*
____ *cause about as many discipline problems as other students do*
____ *cause fewer discipline problems than other students do*

15. Returning students:

____ *fit in well with the other students during class*
____ *don't fit in well with the other students during class*

16. Returning students are:

____ *more motivated than other students*
____ *about as motivated as other students*
____ *less motivated than other students*

17. Returning students:

____ *demand more special privileges than other students*
____ *demand about as many special privileges as other students*
____ *demand fewer special privileges than other students*

18. Returning students:

____ *need less special guidance and direction than other students*
____ *need about as much special guidance and direction as other students*
____ *need more special guidance and direction than other students*

We haven't asked about everything that we might have. If you have any other ideas that you would like us to know about, please write about them in the space below.

Thank you for your help.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire About Returning Students
Completed by
Principals, Vice-Principals, Guidance
Counsellors and Teachers

STUDY OF
RETURNING STUDENTS

Research Department

Board of Education for the City of Toronto

Questionnaire

for

Principals, Guidance Teachers, and Class Teachers

- 1 -

1. What do you think is the best educational setting for a student who returns to school after dropping out?

____ a) *regular day school*
____ b) *part-time regular day school*
____ c) *work experience programs*
____ d) *night school*
____ e) *correspondence courses*
____ f) *level 1, 2, 3 schools*
____ g) *level 4 schools*
____ h) *level 5 schools*
____ i) *alternative schools such as CONTACT*
____ j) *separate classes in regular day schools*
____ k) *depends on the student*
____ l) *don't know, or no opinion*
____ m) *other (please specify)*

_____

2. For what reasons do you think students who have dropped out return to regular day school?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

3. Is it easy for students who have dropped out to resume their education at your school?

YES *NO*

a) If you answered *YES* to question 3, how does your school facilitate the return of such students?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b) If you answered *NO* to question 3, what aspects of your school make it difficult for students to return?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Do returning students have special problems adjusting academically after they return?

YES *NO*

a) If you answered *YES* to question 4, please describe the problems they have adjusting academically.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Do returning students have special problems adjusting socially after they return?

YES *NO*

a) If you answered *YES* to question 5, please describe the problems they have adjusting socially.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. In general, how would you describe the work habits of returning students?

exceptional

above average

average

below average

very poor

can't be described in general

no opinion

Other Comments: _____

_____

7. In general, how would you describe returning students' motivation to learn?

exceptional

above average

average

below average

very poor

can't be described in general

no opinion

Other Comments: _____

_____

8. In general, how would you describe returning students' conduct in school?

exceptional — *can't be described in general*

above average — *no opinion*

average

below average

very poor

Other Comments: _____

_____

9. Are returning students more likely than other students to demand special privileges?

YES *NO*

a) If you answered *YES* to question 9, please describe the special privileges they are more likely to demand.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Do returning students need special guidance or direction?

YES *NO*

a) If you answered *YES* to question 10, please describe the special guidance or direction they need.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Do returning students create problems for other students?

YES *NO*

a) If you answered *YES* to question 11, please describe these problems.

12. Do returning students create any other problems for your school? Please elaborate.

13. Are there any other things you would like to see your school do for returning students?

14. Other comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you.

APPENDIX C

Letter to Students Which Accompanied the Questionnaire

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF TORONTO
155 College Street, Toronto M5T 1P6, Canada, 598-4931

February 8, 1978

TO: A Sample of Toronto Secondary School Students

The Toronto Board of Education is conducting a study of returning students. The data are being gathered in five phases:

1. Phase I: (COMPLETED) Survey of all Toronto Secondary students to identify returning students and some of their characteristics. (November-December 1977)

2. Phase II: A questionnaire to a sample of students who have never dropped out to determine their attitudes toward returning students. (See attached questionnaire) (February, 1978)

3. Phase III: A questionnaire to all Secondary School principals and vice-principals, all Secondary School guidance counsellors, and a sample of secondary school teachers. (February, 1978)

4. Phase IV: In-depth interviews of approximately 250 returning students. (February-June, 1978)

5. Phase V: Identification of and in-depth interviews of a matched group of students who have dropped out of school and not returned. (February-June, 1978)

Attached is the questionnaire for Phase II of the study which is for a sample of Toronto Secondary Students who have never dropped out of school.

Would you kindly complete this questionnaire and return it to the Research Department in the enclosed self-addressed envelop through Board mail by February 28, 1978? All responses will be kept confidential.

Thanking you for your co-operation.

Sylvia Larter
Sylvia Larter
Research Associate

John FitzGerald
John FitzGerald
Research Assistant

/lt

Duncan Green, Director of Education / Edward N. McKeown, Associate Director of Education
Mitchell Lennox, Superintendent of Professional Services / Donald G. Rutledge, Superintendent of Curriculum & Program
Helen I. Sissons, Superintendent of Personnel / Harry G. Facey, Comptroller of Buildings and Plant / David S. Paton, Comptroller of Finance

APPENDIX D

Letter to Principals, Vice-Principals, Guidance Counsellors and Teachers Which Accompanied the Questionnaire

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF TORONTO
155 College Street, Toronto M5T 1P6, Canada, 598-4931

February 8, 1978

TO: Principals, Vice-Principals
Guidance Counsellors and Teachers

The Toronto Board of Education is conducting a study of returning students. The data are being gathered in five phases:

1. Phase I: (COMPLETED) Survey of all Toronto Secondary students to identify returning students and some of their characteristics. (November-December 1977)

2. Phase II: A questionnaire to a sample of students who have never dropped out to determine their attitudes toward returning students. (February, 1978)

3. Phase III: A questionnaire to all Secondary School principals and vice-principals, all Secondary School guidance counsellors, and a sample of secondary school teachers. (See attached questionnaire, February, 1978)

4. Phase IV: In-depth interviews of approximately 250 returning students. (February-June, 1978)

5. Phase V: Identification of and in-depth interviews of a matched group of students who have dropped out of school and not returned. (February-June, 1978)

Attached is the questionnaire for Phase III of the study which is for Principals, Vice-Principals, Guidance Counsellors and Teachers.

Would you kindly complete this questionnaire and return it to the Research Department in the enclosed self-addressed envelope through Board mail by February 28, 1978? All responses will be kept confidential.

Thanking you for your co-operation.

Sylvia Larter
Sylvia Larter
Research Associate

John FitzGerald
John FitzGerald
Research Assistant

Duncan Green, Director of Education / Edward N. McKeown, Associate Director of Education
Mitchell Lennox, Superintendent of Professional Services / Donald C. Rutledge, Superintendent of Curriculum & Program
Helen I. Sissons, Superintendent of Personnel / Harry C. Facey, Comptroller of Buildings and Plant / David S. Paton, Comptroller of Finance

APPENDIX E

Follow-up Letter Sent to
Principals, Vice-Principals, Guidance Counsellors,
Teachers and Students

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF TORONTO
155 College Street, Toronto M5T 1P6, Canada, 598-4931

March 8, 1978

TO: Principals, Vice Principals, Teachers,
Guidance Counsellors and Students

RE: The Questionnaire for the Study of
Returning Students

We recently sent out 1000 questionnaires about returning students to Toronto Secondary School principals, vice-principals, teachers, guidance counsellors and students.

To date, the response rates have been as follows:

Principals/Vice-Principals	77%
Teachers	59%
Guidance Counsellors	67%
Students	60%

In order to write a high quality report, it is important that we receive as many responses as possible. According to our records, we have not yet received your response.

We would very much appreciate receiving your answers to the questionnaire as soon as possible. If you have any problems or need another questionnaire, please phone Linda Theis at 598-4931, extension 396.

Thanking you,

Sylvia Larter

Sylvia Larter
Research Associate

John FitzGerald

John FitzGerald
Research Assistant

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Duncan Green, Director of Education / Edward N. McKeown, Associate Director of Education
Mitchell Lennox, Superintendent of Professional Services / Donald C. Rutledge, Superintendent of Curriculum & Program
Helen I. Sissons, Superintendent of Personnel / Harry G. Facey, Comptroller of Buildings and Plant / David S. Paton, Comptroller of Finance